



Conversations for ethically complex care

A framework to support discussion and documentation of decision making for levels of care in clinical practice

This framework has been designed to help clinicians, patients and their families or carers make decisions together about the levels of care that will be provided when a clinical decision is required.

In more complex cases or situations we recommend the use of the Ethical Care Decision-Making Record (ECDMR) to record the conversation and decisions.

The following steps are a guide to shape **discussions** with patients, family/carers and colleagues about levels of care and treatment for the patient. There will be circumstances

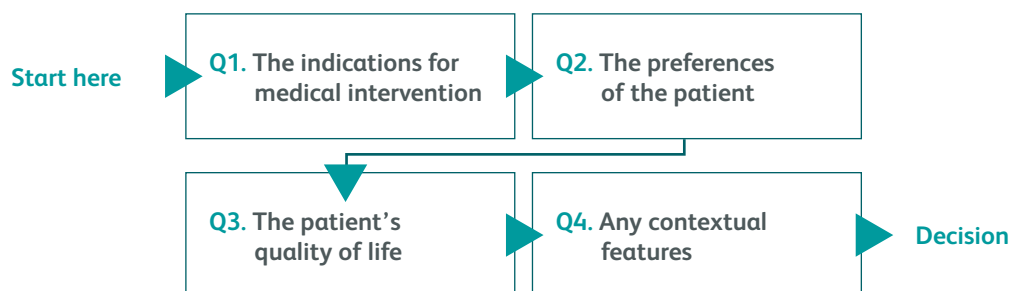
where this approach is not appropriate. There may be situations beyond the scope of this process that require external expert and/or legal intervention and judgement.

Key guiding principles in decision making and biomedical ethics

- > Respect for patients
- > Duty of care
- > Equity of care
- > Accountability and transparency
- > Inclusivity
- > Reasonableness

ECDMR: Step one Define the purpose of the decision-making process

ECDMR: Step two The four question (4Q) approach*



* Influenced by: Jonsen AR, Siegler M, Winslade WJ. *Clinical ethics: A practical approach to ethical decisions in clinical medicine*, 8th edn. McGraw-Hill; 2015

Q1. What specific clinical decision is being discussed, and what are the possible outcomes?

Q2. What are the patient's preferences?

- A. The presence and particulars of any advance care plan (ACP), do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (DNACPR) decision or recommended summary plan for emergency care and treatment (ReSPECT) document.
- B. Consider their mental capacity to make this decision.
- C. The patient's wishes, if they have capacity to express them, regarding the impact or potential outcome of the decision.
- D. The views of the clinical teams about the decision – specifically what is felt to be in the patient's best interests.
- E. Any other relevant source of information, such as the name and details of a family member or carer involved in the discussion.

Q3. What are the effects on the patient's quality of life?

- A. The patient's views (if they have capacity) on the effects of the decision, or outcome on their quality of life.

and/or
- B. The views of the clinical teams regarding any likely effects of the decision on the patient's quality of life.
- C. Consideration given to multiple conditions and underlying health conditions and, for an older adult, the current level of dependency – measured on the Clinical Frailty Scale.
- D. The influence of any discerning features such as a prognostic score or performance measure.

Q4. What contextual factors, if any, have an impact on the decision or outcome?

ECDMR: Step three Agreed decision and course of action

- > Date and time recorded (along with any planned review date)
- > Clearly communicated / shared
- > Clear ownership and/or handover of clinical responsibility
- > All contributing team members recorded
- > Further steps agreed or documentation completed (if required)

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The ECDMR and more comprehensive guidance on the framework are available at
www.rcplondon.ac.uk/ethically-complex-care
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